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FM USINT HAVANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5116
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCOGCA/COMNAVBASE GUANTANAMO BAY CU PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUCOWCV/CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCE/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000042

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CCA AND WHA/PD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: CUBAN ASSISTANCE TO HAITI POST EARTHQUAKE

REF: HAVANA 11 (CLIMATE CHANGE DISTRACTION)

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Cuban assistance to Haiti after the earthquake consists primarily of mobilizing doctors and nurses already in country, supplemented by teams of Cuban doctors who specialize in emergency medical assistance. Cuba is also transporting Haitian doctors who studied in Cuba and Haitian medical students still training in Cuba back to Haiti to assist in the medical response. The Government of Cuba granted a U.S. request for overflight permission to assist with medical evacuations, and has publicly indicated a willingness to cooperate further as needed. END SUMMARY

CUBAN AND CUBAN-TRAINED DOCTORS

12. (U) Cuba's immediate response to the January 12 earthquake was to point to the 403 total Cuban "collaborators" already in Haiti at the time of the earthquake, 344 of which are doctors and nurses working as part of Cuba's medical diplomacy efforts. Most of the Cuban health professionals already in Haiti specialize in primary care or ophthalmology.

Over the course of the next few days, Cuba sent 60 more doctors as part of Cuba's "Henry Reeve Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disaster Situations and Serious Epidemics" (Note: the Henry Reeve brigades were established in September 2005 as part of the GOC's offer of medical assistance to the United States following Hurricane Katrina. End Note.)

13. (U) The GOC has arranged for the return of 32 Haitians who graduated from the Cuban Medical School in Santiago de Cuba and is in the process of sending several more teams of Haitian medical students currently training in Cuba back to Haiti. The Cuban press notes that nearly 500 Haitians have graduated from Cuban medical schools. The Cuban press has also reported the delivery of at least 10 tons of medical supplies to Haiti, including medicines, food, serums, and plasma.

14. (U) The Cuban doctors and nurses are concentrated in four Haitian field hospitals located in or next to: 1) Ofatma, a facility within the Military Hospital facilities; 2) Renaissance Ophthalmology Center, a facility used for the joint Cuban-Venezuelan eye-surgery program Operation Miracle; 3) The Peace University Hospital (also called Delmas 33); and a facility in Leogane. Cuban doctors are also providing

emergency services in the neighboring departments of Aquin, Mirebalais, Grand Goave, Anse-a-Veu and Raboteau.

WORKING WITH THE USG

15. (SBU) On February 13, the GOC granted overflight authorization for U.S. planes to carry out medical evacuations from Haiti in accordance with a 2005 bilateral agreement. On January 15, North America Director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Josefina Vidal told the press that Cuba "is disposed to cooperate with every country operating in Haiti, including the United States, to help the Haitian people and save lives." Similar remarks were also made at the United Nations.

PRESS COVERAGE AND COMMENTS ON U.S. ASSISTANCE TO HAITI

16. (U) The earthquake continues to dominate the local Cuban press with mostly factual reporting from Haiti, including initial plans for U.S. assistance. Over the weekend, the press started quoting complaints from France, Brazil, Nicaragua, and CARICOM regarding the "arbitrary handling by the United States of the Haitian airport, denying on repeated occasions landing permission to aid flights." An "opinion" article on January 18 criticized President Obama's appointment of former president George W. Bush to co-direct an aid fund for Haiti as "cynicism without limit." Communist Party leader and former president Fidel Castro has written two reflections on Haiti highlighting Cuban assistance and linking the earthquake to climate change and the "mockery, scorn and deception in Copenhagen" (reftel).

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CUBANS AFFECTED

17. (U) Shortly after the earthquake, Cuba issued a tsunami watch and evacuated more than 30,000 people from the eastern city of Baracoa "within hours." Despite the proximity, Cuba did not feel the earthquake or any of the aftershocks. The GOC has reported no deaths and three injuries suffered by Cubans in Haiti, including one student who remains in critical condition after being evacuated to a hospital in Santiago de Cuba.
BARCLAY